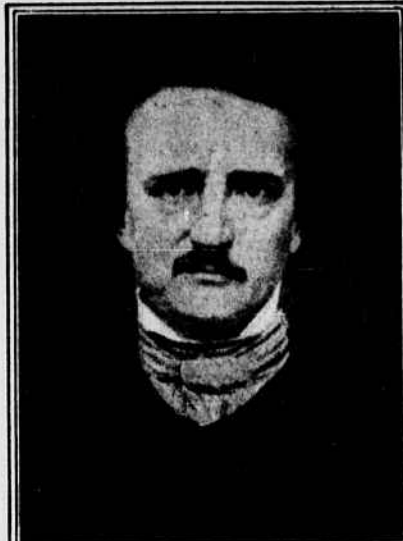
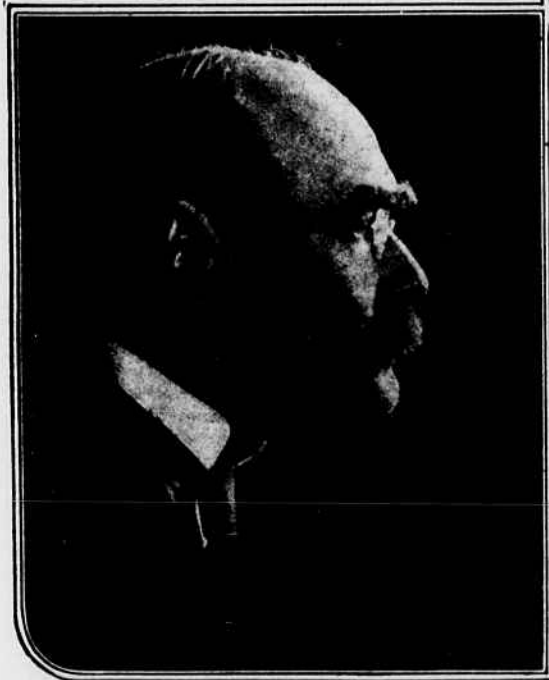




ALL the people on this page wanted to commit suicide at one time or another. They didn't, though. They lived to lead armies and write books and compose music and manage states. Before you buy that arsenic or sample the river or use up \$2 worth of your landlady's gas, just because you are sick of the subway, or because your mother-in-law, to cap the climax of atrocities, gave your dress pants to the Salvation Army, read what Robert Burns wrote to his father after he had left the home farm at Alloway to seek his fortune: "I am quite transported by the thought that e'er long I shall bid an eternal adieu to the disquietudes of this weary life; for I assure you I am heartily tired of it, and if I do not very much deceive myself, I am soon to contentedly resign it." Then restrain yourself, as he did.

JUST how nearly we came to missing out entirely on "Mulvaney" and "Kim" and "Gunga Din" and "Mrs. Hauksbee" was indicated by Rudyard Kipling in an address before the students of McGill University some time ago, in which he declared that as a young man he "was frequently inclined to avenge thwarted hopes by taking away from nature the thing she had so casually brought into being." At this time the Anglo-Indian genius was "slinging ink" unremuneratively on a daily in the northwest provinces, and life must have stretched out before him interminably sunbaked, dreary, and unprepossessing. Kipling never forgave his youth for its bitterness. "If there is any terror or despair equal to that of adolescence, it has yet to be discovered," he declared once in an interview. Photograph by E. O. Hoppé.



NO doubt it is nice to be on letter-writing terms with a genius, but there are crumpled rose leaves even in that bliss. Edgar Allan Poe liked to write letters to his friends, and he had a wide correspondence. The friends, however, were liable to get something like this when they least expected it: "My feelings at this moment are pitiable indeed. I have struggled against the influence of this melancholy, but am miserable in spite of the vast improvement in my circumstances. I am wretched, and know not why. Console me if you can. But let it be quickly or it will be too late. Write me immediately. Convince me that life is worth while. Oh, the bliss of putting oneself to sleep, never to wake!" John Pendleton Kennedy was the recipient of this threnody.

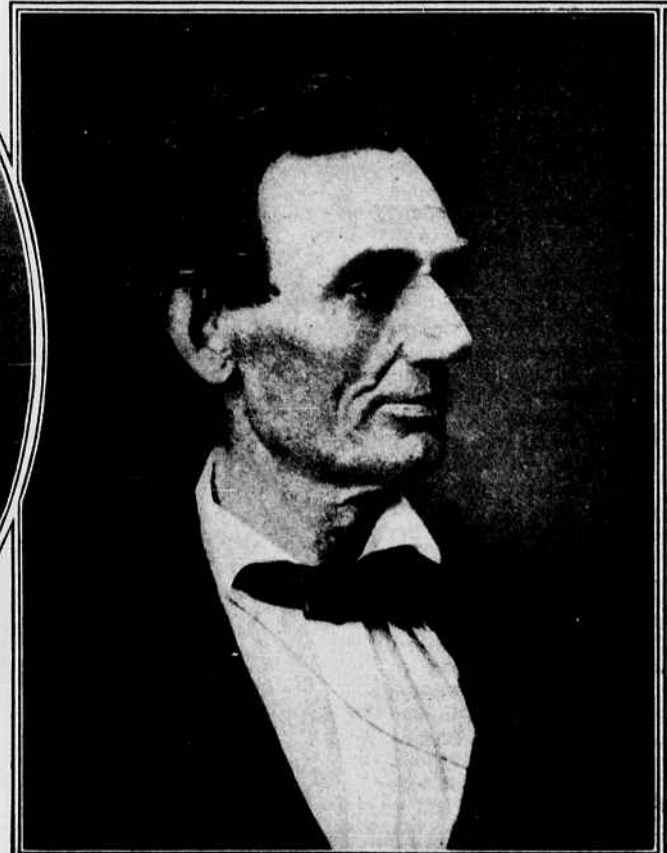
They Wanted to



SAMUEL JOHNSON, of course, was always scaring his faithful henchman and biographer Boswell into fits by threatening suicide. "I shall be gone e'er this reaches you," was the terrifying message despatched to the useful satellite one cold January midnight. When the panting Boswell, half clothed, reached the lodgings of the ponderous essayist, he found the latter enjoying beer and sausages in high good humor. "I think now that I will defer my experiment until next week," said Johnson; "but I warn you it is merely a postponement and that I have by no means relinquished the idea."



LIKE Kipling, Marian Evans (George Eliot) had no patience with the assertion that childhood days are happiest. "Mine for the most part were indescribably baffled and miserable," she wrote her friend Mrs. Bray. "Up to my eighteenth year I found little joy in living. It seemed too great a task. When I was sixteen I often thought of ending everything. Oh, the impenetrable puzzle of youth! — youth which should be so beautiful, but which is often so sad!" George Eliot grew happier as she grew older. Indeed, as she neared sixty she became quite frolicsome and gay, taking a lively interest in dress and society; and at sixty-two, to the astonishment of every one, she married John W. Cross, after it had been asserted by the world that she could never get over Henry Lewes' death.



LINCOLN, too, had his hours of more than despair. When he was thirty-two and life seemed to promise little more than a law practice in rural Illinois all his days, he wrote to his partner, Stuart: "I am now the most miserable man living. If what I feel were equally distributed to the whole human family there would not be one cheerful face on earth. Whether I shall ever be better I can not tell. I awfully forebode I shall not. To remain as I am is quite impossible. I must die to be better, it appears to me. . . . I can write no more." At this time Lincoln also sent his friend Herndon an article clipped from the Sangamon Journal entitled "Suicide."